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# WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR WILL POWER

RUSSELL H. CONWELL

KD 31761

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Through the Victory Book Campaign
(A. L. A. — A. R. C. — U. S. O.)
to the Armed Forces and Merchant Marine

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# WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR WILL POWER

BY

RUSSELL H. CONWELL
AUTHOR OF
*"Acres of Diamonds"*

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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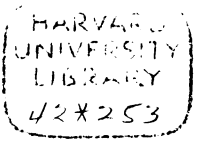


## Books by
## RUSSELL H. CONWELL

HOW A SOLDIER MAY SUCCEED AFTER THE WAR or The Corporal with the Book

OBSERVATION: EVERY MAN HIS OWN UNIVERSITY.

ACRES OF DIAMONDS.

WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR WILL POWER

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HARPER & BROTHERS
[Established 1817]

What You Can Do With Your Will Power

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# PREFACE

Other writers have fully and accurately described *the road*, and my only hope is that these hastily written lines will inspire the young man or young woman to arise *and go*.

RUSSELL H. CONWELL.

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# WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR WILL POWER

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# WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR WILL POWER

## I

SUCCESS has no secret. Her voice is forever ringing through the market-place and crying in the wilderness, and the burden of her cry is one word—WILL. Any normal young man who hears and heeds that cry is equipped fully to climb to the very heights of life.

The message I would like to leave with the young men and women of America is a message I have been trying humbly to deliver from lecture

The Author is much indebted to Mr. Merle Crowell of the *American Magazine* who assisted most efficiently in the preparation of the facts herein contained.



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platform and pulpit for more than fifty years. It is a message the accuracy of which has been affirmed and reaffirmed in thousands of lives whose progress I have been privileged to watch. And the message is this: Your future stands before you like a block of unwrought marble. You can work it into what you will. Neither heredity, nor environment, nor any obstacles superimposed by man can keep you from marching straight through to success, provided you are guided by a firm, driving determination and have normal health and intelligence.

Determination is the battery that commands every road of life. It is the armor against which the missiles of adversity rattle harmlessly. If there is one thing I have tried peculiarly to do through these years it is to indent in the minds of the youth of America the living fact that when they give WILL the reins and say "DRIVE" they are headed toward the heights.



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The institution out of which Temple University, of Philadelphia, grew was founded thirty years ago expressly to furnish opportunities for higher education to poor boys and girls who are willing to work for it. I have seen ninety thousand students enter its doors. A very large percentage of these came to Philadelphia without money, but firmly determined to get an education. I have never known one of them to go back defeated. Determination has the properties of a powerful acid; all shackles melt before it.

Conversely, lack of will power is the readiest weapon in the arsenal of failure. The most hopeless proposition in the world is the fellow who thinks that success is a door through which he will sometime stumble if he roams around long enough. Some men seem to expect ravens to feed them, the cruse of oil to remain inexhaustible, the fish to come right up over the side of the boat at meal-time. They believe



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that life is a series of miracles. They loaf about and trust in their lucky star, and boldly declare that the world owes them a living.

As a matter of fact the world owes a man nothing that he does not earn. In this life a man gets about what he is worth, and he must render an equivalent for what is given him. There is no such thing as inactive success.

My mind is running back over the stories of thousands of boys and girls I have known and known about, who have faced every sort of a handicap and have won out solely by will and perseverance in working with all the power that God had given them. It is now nearly thirty years since a young English boy came into my office. He wanted to attend the evening classes at our university to learn oratory.

"Why don't you go into the law?" I asked him.

"I'm too poor! I haven't a chance!" he replied, shaking his head sadly.



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I turned on him sharply. "Of course you haven't a chance," I exclaimed, "if you don't make up your mind to it!"

The next night he knocked at my door again. His face was radiant and there was a light of determination in his eyes.

"I have decided to become a lawyer," he said, and I knew from the ring of his voice that he meant it.

Many times after he became mayor of Philadelphia he must have looked back on that decision as the turning-point in his life.

I am thinking of a young Connecticut farm lad who was given up by his teachers as too weak-minded to learn. He left school when he was seven years old and toiled on his father's farm until he was twenty-one. Then something turned his mind toward the origin and development of the animal kingdom. He began to read works on zoology, and, in order to enlarge his capacity



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for understanding, went back to school and picked up where he left off fourteen years before. Somebody said to him, "You can get to the top *if you will!*"

He grasped the hope and nurtured it, until at last it completely possessed him. He entered college at twenty-eight and worked his way through with the assistance that we were able to furnish him. To-day he is a respected professor of zoology in an Ohio college.

Such illustrations I could multiply indefinitely. Of all the boys whom I have tried to help through college I cannot think of a single one who has failed for any other reason than ill health. But of course I have never helped any one who was not first helping himself. As soon as a man determines the goal toward which he is marching, he is in a strategic position to see and seize everything that will contribute toward that end.

Whenever a young man tells me that if he "had his way" he would be a



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lawyer, or an engineer, or what not, I always reply:

"You can be what you will, provided that it is something the world will be demanding ten years hence."

This brings to my mind a certain stipulation which the ambition of youth must recognize. You must invest yourself or your money in a *known demand.* You must select an occupation that is fitted to your own special genius and to some actual want of the people. Choose as early as possible what your life-work will be. Then you can be continually equipping yourself by reading and observing to a purpose. There are many things which the average boy or girl learns in school that could be learned outside just as well.

Almost any man should be able to become wealthy in this land of opulent opportunity. There are some people who think that to be pious they must be very poor and very dirty. They



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are wrong. Not money, but the *love* of money, is the root of all evil. Money in itself is a dynamic force for helping humanity.

In my lectures I have borne heavily on the fact that we are all walking over acres of diamonds and mines of gold. There are people who think that their fortune lies in some far country. It is much more likely to lie right in their own back yards or on their front door-step, hidden from their unseeing eye. Most of our millionaires discovered their fortunes by simply looking around them.

Recently I have been investigating the lives of four thousand and forty-three American millionaires. All but twenty of them started life as poor boys, and all but forty of them have contributed largely to their communities, and divided fairly with their employees as they went along. But, alas, not one rich man's son out of seventeen dies rich.



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But if a man has dilly-dallied through a certain space of wasted years, can he then develop the character—the motor force—to drive him to success? Why, my friend, will power cannot only be developed, but it is often dry powder which needs only a match. Very frequently I think of the life of Abraham Lincoln — that wonderful man! and I am thankful that I was permitted to meet him. Yet Abraham Lincoln developed the splendid sinews of his will after he was twenty-one. Before that he was just a roving, good-natured sort of a chap. Always have I regretted that I failed to ask him what special circumstance broke the chrysalis of his life and loosened the wings of his will.

Many years ago some of the students of Temple University held a meeting in a building opposite the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel. As they were leaving the building they noticed a foreigner selling peanuts on the opposite curb.



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She shook her head and smiled, as
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to estimate herself.

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## II

THERE is a deplorable tendency among many people to wait for a particularly favorable opportunity to declare themselves in the battle of life. Some people pause for the rap of opportunity when opportunity has been playing a tattoo on their resonant skulls for years.

Hardly a single great invention has been placed on the market without a number of men putting forth the claim that they had the idea first—and in most cases they proved the fact. But while they were sitting down and dreaming, or trying to bring the device to a greater perfection, a man with initiative rose up and acted. The telegraph, telephone, sewing-machine, air-brake, mowing-machine, wireless, and linotype-machine are only a few illustrations.



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While buying peanuts they got to talking with the fellow, and told him that any one could obtain an education if he was willing to work for it. Eagerly the poor fellow drank up all the information he could get. He enrolled at Temple University and worked his way through, starting with the elementary studies. He is to-day an eminent practising physician in the national capital.

Often I think of an office clerk who reached a decision that the ambitions which were stirring in his soul could be realized if he could only get an education. He attended our evening classes and was graduated with a B.S. degree. He is now the millionaire head of one of the largest brokerage houses in the country.

"Where there's a will there's a way!" But one needs to use a little common sense about selecting the way. A general may determine to win a victory, but if he hurls his troops across an open field straight into the



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leaden sweep of the enemy's artillery he invites disaster and defeat. The best general lays his plans carefully, and advances his troops in the way that will best conserve their strength and numbers. So must a man plan his campaign of life.

No man has a right, either for himself or for others, to be at work in a factory, or a store, or anywhere else, unless he would work there from choice —money or no money—if he had the necessities of life.

"As a man thinks, so he is," says the writer of Proverbs; but as a man adjusts himself, so really is he, after all. One great trouble with many individuals is that they are made up of all sorts of machinery that is not adjusted, that is out of place—no belts on the wheels, no fire under the boiler, hence no steam to move the mechanism.

Some folk never take the trouble to size themselves up—to find out what



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they are fitted to do—and then wonder why they remain way down at the bottom of the heap. I remember a young woman who told me that she did not believe she could ever be of any particular use in the world. I mentioned a dozen things that she ought to be able to do.

"If you only knew yourself," I said, "you would set yourself to writing. You ought to be an author."

She shook her head and smiled, as if she thought I was making fun of her. Later, force of circumstances drove her to take up the pen. And when she came to me and told me that she was making three thousand dollars a year in literary work, and was soon to go higher, I thought back to the time when she was a poor girl making three dollars a week when she failed accurately to estimate herself.

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The most wonderful idea is quite valueless until it is put into practical operation. The Government rewards the man who first gets a patent or first puts his invention into practical use—and the world does likewise. Thus the dreamer must always lag behind the door.

True will power also predicates concentration. I shall never forget the time I went to see President Lincoln to ask him to spare the life of one of my soldiers who was sentenced to be shot. As I walked toward the door of his office I felt a greater fear than I had ever known when the shells were bursting all about us at Antietam. Finally I mustered up courage to knock on the door. I heard a voice inside yell:

"Come in and sit down!"

The man at the table did not look up as I entered; he was busy over a bunch of papers. I sat down at the edge of a chair and wished I were in



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Peking or Patagonia. He never looked up until he had quite finished with the papers. Then he turned to me and said:

"I am a very busy man and have only a few minutes to spare. Tell me in the fewest words what it is you want."

As soon as I mentioned the case he said:

"I have heard all about it, and you do not need to tell me any more. Mr. Stanton was talking to me about that only a few days ago. You can go to the hotel and rest assured that the President never did sign an order to shoot a boy under twenty, and never will. You may tell his mother that." Then, after a short conversation, he took hold of another bunch of papers and said, decidedly, "Good morning!"

Lincoln, one of the greatest men of the world, owed his success largely to one rule: whatsoever he had to do at all he put his whole mind into, and



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held it all there until the task was all done. That makes men great almost anywhere.

Too many people are satisfied if they have done a thing "well enough." That is a fatal complacency. "Well enough" has cursed souls. "Well enough" has wrecked enterprises. "Well enough" has destroyed nations. If perfection in a task can possibly be reached, nothing short of perfection is "well enough." Governor Talbot of Massachusetts got his high office because General Swift made a happy application of the truth in saying to the convention, "I nominate for Governor of this state a man who, when he was a farmer's boy, hoed to the end of the row." That saying became a campaign slogan all up and down the state. "He hoed to the end of the row! He hoed to the end of the row!" When the people discovered that this was one of the characteristics of the man, they elected him by one of the greatest



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majorities ever given a Governor in Massachusetts.

Yet we must bear in mind that there is such a thing as overdoing anything. Young people should draw a line between study that secures wisdom and study that breaks down the mind; between exercise that is healthful and exercise that is injurious; between a conscientiousness that is pure and divine and a conscientiousness that is over-morbid and insane; between economy that is careful and economy that is stingy; between industry that is a reasonable use of their powers and industry that is an over-use of their powers, leading only to destruction.

The best ordered mind is one that can grasp the problems that gather around a man constantly and work them out to a logical conclusion; that sees quickly what anything means, whether it be an exhibition of goods, a juxtaposition of events, or the suggestions of literature.



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A man is made up largely of his daily observations. School training serves to fit and discipline him so that he may read rightly the lesson of the things he sees around him. Men have made mighty fortunes by just using their eyes.

Several years ago I took dinner in New York with one of the great millionaires of that city. In the course of our talk he told me something about his boyhood days—how, with hardly a penny in his pocket, he slung a pack on his back and set out along the Erie Canal, looking for a job. At last he got one. He was paid three dollars a week to make soft soap for the laborers to use at the locks in washing their hands. One can hardly imagine a more humble occupation; but this boy kept his eyes open. He saw the disadvantages of soft soap, and set to work to make a hard substitute for it. Finally he succeeded, and his success brought him many, many millions.



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Every person is designed for a definite work in life, fitted for a particular sphere. Before God he has a right to that sphere. If you are an excellent housekeeper you should not be running a loom, and it is your duty to prepare yourself to enter at the first opportunity the sphere for which you are fitted.

George W. Childs, who owned the Philadelphia *Ledger*, once blacked boots and sold newspapers in front of the *Ledger* building. He told me how he used to look at that building and declare over and over to himself that some day he would own the great newspaper establishment that it housed. When he mentioned his ambition to his associates they laughed at him. But Childs had indomitable grit, and ultimately he did come to own that newspaper establishment, one of the finest in the country.

Another thing very necessary to the pursuit of success is the proper employment of waiting moments. How



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do you use your waiting time for meals, for trains, for business? I suppose that if the average individual were to employ wisely these intervals in which he whistles and twiddles his thumbs he would soon accumulate enough knowledge to quite make over his life.

I went through the United States Senate in 1867 and asked each of the members how he got his early education. I found that an extremely large percentage of them had simply properly applied their waiting moments. Even Charles Sumner, a university graduate, told me that he learned more from the books he read outside of college than from those he had studied within. General Burnside, who was then a Senator, said that he had always had a book beside him in the shop where he worked.

Before leaving the subject of the power of the will, there is one thing I would like to say: a true will must have a decent regard for the happiness



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of others. Do not get so wrapped up in your own mission that you forget to be kind to other people, for you have not fulfilled every duty unless you have fulfilled the duty of being pleasant. Enemies and ignorance are the two most expensive things in a man's life. I never make unnecessary enemies—they cost too much.

Every one has within himself the tools necessary to carve out success. Consecrate yourself to some definite mission in life, and let it be a mission that will benefit the world as well as yourself. Remember that nothing can withstand the sweep of a determined will—unless it happens to be another will equally as determined. Keep clean, fight hard, pick your openings judiciously, and have your eyes forever fixed on the heights toward which you are headed. If there be any other formula for success, I do not know it.

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## III

THE biography of that great patriot and statesman, Daniel Manin of Venice, Italy, contains a very romantic example of the possibilities of will force. He was born in a poor quarter of the city; his parents were without rank or money. Venice in 1805 was under the Austrian rule and was sharply divided into aristocratic and peasant classes. He was soon deserted by his father and left to the support of his mother. He was a dull boy, and could not keep along with other boys in the church schools; his mind labored as slowly as did the childhood intellects of many of the greatest men of history. Daniel seemed destined to earn his living digging mud out of the canals, if he supported himself at all. No American boy can be handicapped like



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that. But the children who learn slowly learn surely, and history, which is but the biography of great men, mentions again and again the fact that the great characters began to be able to acquire learning late in life. Napoleon and Wellington were both dull boys, and Lincoln often said that he was a dunce through his early years. Daniel Manin seems to have been utterly unable to learn from books until he was eight or ten years old. But his latent will power was suddenly developed to an unexpected degree when he was quite a youth. Kossuth, who was a personal friend of Manin, said in an address in New York that the American Republic was responsible for the awakening of Manin, and through him had made Italy free.

It appears that an American sea-captain, while discharging a cargo in Venice, employed Daniel as an errand-boy, and when the ship sailed the captain made Daniel a present of a



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gilt-edged copy of the lives of George Washington and John Hancock in one volume. The captain, who had greatly endeared himself to Daniel, made the boy promise solemnly that he would learn to read the book. But Daniel was utterly ignorant of the English language in print and had learned only a few phrases from the captain. The gift of that book made Venice a republic, led to the adoption of sections of the United States Constitution by that state and carried the principles on into the constitution of United Italy. That book awakened the sleeping will power of the industrious dull boy. Even his mother protested against his waste of time in trying to read English when he was unable to conquer the primers in Italian. But he secured a phrase-book and a grammar, and paid for them in hard labor. With those crude implements, without a teacher, he determined to read that book. Only one friend, a young priest in St.



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Mark's Cathedral, gave him any word or look of encouragement. But his candle burned late, and the returning daylight took him to his book to study until time for breakfast. Then came the daily task as a messenger, or gondolier. Some weeks or months after he began his seemingly foolish problem he rushed into his mother's room at night, excited and noisy, shouting to her: "I can read that book! I can read that book!" There comes a moment in the life of every successful student of a foreign language when he suddenly awakens to the consciousness that he can think in that language. From that point on the work is always easy. It must have been a similar psychological change which came into Daniel's intellect. So sudden was it, so amazing the change, that the priest reported the case as a miracle, and the little circle of the poor people who knew the boy looked on him with awe. Consul - General Sparks, who repre-



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sented the United States at Venice in 1848, wrote that "Manin often mentions his intellectual new birth, and his success in reading the life of Washington in English spurs him on in the difficult and dangerous undertakings connected with the efforts of Venice to get free."

When Daniel began to appreciate his ability to determine to do and to persevere, his ambition and hope brought to him larger views of life. He resolved to learn in other ways. He took up school books and mastered them thoroughly, and he became known as "a boy who works slowly, but what he does at all he does well." He soon found helpers among kind gentlemen and secured employment in a bookstall. The accounts of his persistence and his achievements are as thrilling and as fascinating as any finished romance. He managed to get a college education, recognized by Padua University; he studied law and was ad-



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mitted to the bar when he was twenty-two years of age. The Austrian judges would not admit him to their courts, and it is said he visited his law-office regularly and daily for nearly two years before he had a paying client. But his strong will, shown in his perseverance in the presence of starvation, won the respect and love of the daughter of a wealthy patrician. They had been married but a short time when the Austrians confiscated the property of his father-in-law because of suspicions circulated concerning his secret connection with the "Americani." That patriotic secret society was called the "Carbonari" by the Austrians, and Manin became the leading spirit in the Venetian branch. His will seemed resistless. He refused the Presidency in 1832, when revolution shook the tyrannies of all Europe and Venice fell back under Austrian control. But in 1848 he was almost unanimously elected President of the "American Re-



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public of Venice"; and in his second proclamation before the great siege began he issued a call for the election, using, as Consul-General Sparks records, the following language (as translated): "and until the election is held and the officers installed the following sections of the Constitution of the United States of America shall be the law of the City." He was determined to secure an "American republic" in Italy. He lived to see it in Venice. Statues of Daniel Manin are seen now in all the great cities of Italy; and when the statue was dedicated at Venice and a city park square named after him, he was called the father of the new kingdom of Italy. General Garibaldi said that when Manin made a draft of the Constitution he proposed for United Italy, he quoted the American Declaration of Independence. The general also said that Manin insisted the Government of Italy should be like the American Republic, and that



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it was difficult to convince Manin that a king—so called—could be as limited as a President. Even Mazzini, the extremist, and both Cavour and Gavazzi finally came to accept Manin's demands for freedom and equality as they were set forth in the Constitution of the American Republic. Manin did not live to see the final union, nor to see his son a general in the Italian army, but his vigorous will gave a momentum to freedom in Italy which is still pressing the people on to his noblest ideals. "What man has done man can do," and what Manin did can be done again in other achievements.

The normal reader never was anxious that the North Pole should be located, and he does not care now whether it has been discovered. Mathematicians and geographers may find delight in the solution of some abstract problem, but the busy citizen who seizes his paper with haste to see if Peary has



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found the North Pole has no interest in the spot. He would not visit the place if some authority would give him a thousand acres or present him with a dozen ice-floes. What the reader desires is to learn how the will power in those discoverers worked out through hair-breadth escapes, long winters, and starvation's pangs. It is a great game, and the world is a grand stand. The man with the strongest will attracts the admiration of the world. All the world which loves a lover also admires a hero, and a hero is always a man of forceful will. When we read of Louis Joliet and James Marquette in their terrible experience tracing the Mississippi River—Indians as savage as wild beasts, marshes, lakes, forests, mountains, burdens, illness, wounds, exhaustion, seeming failures—all testify to their sublime strength of purpose. Peter Lemoyne, Jonathan Carver, Captain Lewis, Lieutenant Clark, Montgomery Pike, General Fremont, Elisha



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Kent Kane, Charles Francis Hall, David Livingstone, Captain Cook, Paul Du Chaillu, and Henry M. Stanley carved their names deep in walls of history when differing from other men only in the cultivation of a mighty will.

Mary Lyon, the heroine of Mount Holyoke, used to quote frequently the saying of Doctor Beecher that he once had "a machine admirably contrived, admirably adjusted, but it had one fault; *it wouldn't go!*" while Catherine Beecher would retort that Miss Lyon had "too much go for so small a machine." But what a monumental triumph was the dedication of the first building of Mount Holyoke College at South Hadley, Massachusetts. Mrs. Deacon Porter wrote to Henry Ward Beecher: "I wish you could have seen Miss Lyon's face as the procession moved up the street. It was indeed the face of an angel." From that immortal hour when that little woman, peeling potatoes as her brother's housekeeper



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at Buckland, Massachusetts, suddenly determined to start a movement for the higher education of young women, she had written, had traveled, had begged, had given all her inheritance, had visited colleges and schools, going incessantly, working, praying, appealing, until the material embodiment of her martyr sacrifices was opened to women. All women in all countries are greatly in her debt. Men feel grateful for what the higher education of women has done for men. One cannot now walk over the embowered campus of Mount Holyoke College without meditating on what a forceful will of a frail woman, set toward the beautiful and good, can do within the severest limitations. Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, Bryn Mawr, and the thirty-five other colleges for women in Western and Southern states are the children of Mount Holyoke. One lone woman, one single will, a large heart! God sees her and orders His forces to aid her!



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Richard Arkwright, Stephenson, and Edison in the pursuit of an invention, with stern faces and clenched teeth, work far into the morning. John Wesley, Whitfield, and the list of religious reformers from St. Augustine to Dwight L. Moody have been men of dynamic confidence in the triumph of a great idea. Neal Dow, Elizabeth Fry, and their disciples, urging on the cause of temperance with that motive force which they discovered in themselves, aroused the people wherever they went to assistance or to opposition. Fulton said, "I will build a steamboat." Cyrus Field said, "I will lay a telegraph cable to Europe." Sir Christopher Wren, imitating the builders of St. Peter's, said, "I will build the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral." General Washington said, "I will venture all on final victory," and General Grant said, "I will fight it out on this lime." When Abraham Lincoln gave his eloquent tribute to Henry Clay



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in 1852 he said, "Henry Clay's example teaches us that one can scarcely be so poor but that, if he will, he can acquire sufficient education to get through the world respectably." To such men log cabins were universities. Daniel Webster decided, at the end of his day's work plowing a stony field in the New Hampshire hills, that he would be a statesman. Thomas H. Benton, when nearly all men supposed the wilderness unconquerable, decided to push the Republic west to the Rocky Mountains. Salmon P. Chase, from the time he ran the ferry-boat on the Cuyahoga River, kept in his pocket-book a motto, "Where there is a will there is a way." Charles Sumner had a disagreeable habit of talking about himself and boasting of his learning. He was frankly told one day by James T. Fields that it was a "weakening trait." Mr. Sumner thanked Mr. Fields and told him that he had determined "to discontinue



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such foolish talk." "He fought himself," wrote Mr. Fields, "and he conquered." James G. Blaine, in college at Washington, Pennsylvania, saw a student who had been too devoted to football weeping over his failure to pass an examination. Warned by the failure of this student, James told his mother that he would not play another game of football while he was in college. He kept his resolution unbroken throughout the course. When James A. Garfield was earning his tuition as a bell-ringer at Hiram College he resolved that the first stroke of the bell should be exactly on the minute throughout the year. The president of the college stated that the people in the village set their clocks by that bell, and not once in the year was it one minute ahead or behind time. Grover Cleveland at eighteen was drifting about from one job to another, and men prophesied that he would be a disgrace to his "over-pious" father, who was



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a preacher. Mr. Cleveland said in a speech that, "like Martin Luther, I was stopped in my course by a stroke of lightning." It does not appear to what he referred, but it does appear that he decided firmly that he would choose some calling and stick to it. He decided upon the law, and was so fixed in his determination to know law that he stayed in his tutor's office three years after he had been admitted to the bar, and there continued persistently in his studies.

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## IV

IN a small town in western Massachusetts, forty years ago, a young, pale youth was acting as cashier of the savings bank. He was dyspeptic, acutely nervous, and often ill-natured. One day several large factories closed their doors, and the corporations to whom the bank had loaned money gave notice of bankruptcy. The president of the bank was in Europe and the people did not know that the bank was a loser by the failure. The cashier was almost overcome by the sense of danger, for he could not meet a run on the bank with the funds he had on hand. He entered the bank after a sleepless night, fearing that the people might in some way learn of the bank's responsibility. He was sleepy, faint, discouraged. An old farmer came in



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to get a small check cashed, and the glum cashier did not answer the farmer's usual salutation. His face was cloudy, his eyes bloodshot, and his whole manner irritating. He counted out the money and threw it at the farmer. The old man counted his money carefully and then called out to the cashier: "What's the matter? Is your bank going to fail?" When the farmer had left the bank the young cashier could see that his manner was letting out that which he wished to conceal. He then paced up and down the bank and fought it all out with himself. He determined he would be cheerful, brave, and strong. He forced himself to smile, and soon was able to laugh at himself for presenting such a ridiculous appearance. He met the next customer with a hearty greeting of good cheer. All the forenoon he grew stronger in his determination to let nothing move him to gloom again. About noon the



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daily Boston paper came and announced the possible failure of that bank. Almost instantly the news flew about town, and a wild mob assailed the bank, screaming for their money. But the cheerful cashier met them with a smile and made fun of their excitement. The eighteenth man demanding his money was an old German, who, seeing the cashier count out the money so coolly and cheerfully, drew back his bank-book and said: "If you have the money, we don't want it now! But we thought you didn't have it!" That suggestion made the crowd laugh, and in half an hour the crowd had left and those who had drawn their money in many cases asked the cashier to take it back. The cashier now is a most successful manufacturer and railroad director, stout-hearted and cheerful. He often refers to the fight he had that morning with his "insignificant, flabby little self."



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To appreciate one's power at command is the first consideration. A man from Cooperstown, New York, visited St. Anthony Falls, Minnesota, in the early fifties of the last century and laughed loud and long at the ridiculous little mill which turned out a few bags of flour and sawed a few thousand feet of lumber. It was indeed ludicrous. He could think of no comparison except an elephant drawing a baby's tin toy. His laughter led to a heated discussion and investigation. An army officer at Fort Snelling, who was a civil engineer, was asked to make an estimate of the Mississippi River's horse-power at St. Anthony Falls. His report was beyond the civilian's belief. He said there was power enough to turn the wheels to grind out ten thousand barrels of flour a day and to cut logs into millions of square feet of board every hour. The estimate was below the facts, but was not accepted



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for ten years. Then was constructed the strong dam which built up the great city of Minneapolis and represents the finest and most vigorous civilization of our age. Nevertheless, there still runs to waste ten thousand horse-power. In the first paper-mill erected at South Hadley Falls, Massachusetts, the horse-power used was less than one hundred, yet an engineer employed by Mr. Chapin, of Springfield, to determine the possible power of the Connecticut River at that point reported it so great that unbelief in his figures postponed for a long time all the proposed enterprises. But one poor man, determined "to do something about it," promoted a system of canals which now so utilizes the water that a large city, manufacturing annually products worth many millions, draws from it comfort and riches. Massive as are the present works at Holyoke, regret is often expressed that so much of



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the water-power still goes over the mighty dam and ridicules the smallness of the faith of those who tried to harness it.

Such is the intellectual force in a young person's mind. It is reasonable to conclude that no mind ever did its very best, and that no will power was ever exerted continuously to its greatest capacity. But the first essential in the making of noble character is to gain a full appreciation of the latent or unused force which each individual possesses. When one without foolish egotism realizes how much can be done with his wasting energies, then he must carefully consider to what object he will turn his power. Great wills are often wasted on unworthy objects, and the strong current of the mind, which could be applied to the making of world-enriching machinery, is used to manufacture some unsalable toy. The mind is often compared to an electric dynamo.



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The figure is accurate. It is an automatic, self-charging battery which, when applied to worthy occupation or to a high purpose, distributes happiness, progress, and intelligence to mankind, and as a natural consequence brings riches and honor to the industrious possessor.

Forty years ago there was on the lips of nearly every teacher and father a fascinating story of a Massachusetts boy whose history illustrates forcibly the "power to will" which is latent in us all. I need not state the details of the life, as it is only the illustration which we need here.

A young fellow sat on a barrel at the door of a country grocery-store in a small village not far from Boston. He was the son of an industrious mechanic who had opened a small shop for making and repairing farm utensils, such as rakes, hoes, and shovels. But the son, encouraged by an indulgent mother, would not work. He



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gave way to cards, drink, and bad company. He would not go to school, and was a continual source of alarm to his parents, and he became the talk of the neighbors. He either was ill with a cough or pretended to fear consumption; the doctor's advice to set him at work in the open air was not enforced by his anxious mother. He was a fair sample of the many thousand young men seen now about the country stores and taverns. He had, however, the unusual disadvantage of having his board and clothing furnished to him without earning them. If he exercised his will, it was to turn it against himself in a determined self-indulgence. I heard him once refer to those days and quote Virgil in saying that "the descent to Avernus is easy."

One evening with his hands in his pockets he strolled up to the store and post-office to meet some other young men for a game of checkers. Under



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the only street lamp near the store a patent-medicine peddler had opened one side of his covered wagon and was advertising his "universal cure." The boy—then about nineteen years old—listened listlessly to the songs and stories, but was not interested enough to learn what was offered for sale. The vender of medicines held up a chain composed of several seemingly solid rings which he skilfully took apart. He then offered a dollar to any one who would put the rings together as they were before. The puzzle caught the eye and interest of the careless boy; as the rings were passed from one to another they came to him. He looked them over and said, "I can't do it," and passed them on. The Yankee peddler yelled at the boy, "If you talk like that you will land in the poorhouse!" The young fellow was cut to the heart with the short rebuke. He was inclined to answer hotly, but lacked the courage.



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After the other boys had had their chance to see the rings, he asked to examine them again; but he still saw no way to cut or open the solid steel and contemptuously threw them at the peddler and shouted, "You're fooling; that can't be done!" The smiling vender rolled the rings into a chain in an instant and, throwing it to the boy, said, sarcastically: "Take it home to your mother; she can do it!" The young fellow, ashamed, angry, and crushed, caught the chain and crept out of the crowd and went home, entering his room by the back stairs. He hated the peddler with a murderous passion, but despised himself and must have wept great tears far into the night. The next morning he sat on the side of his bed, gazing at the chain, long after his father had gone to work. That was a terrible battle! All who succeed must fight that battle to victory at some time, or life is a failure. He who conquers himself can



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conquer other men. He who does not rule himself cannot control other people. For the first time that boy was conscious of his lack of WILL. He was painfully ashamed. He could not again meet the boys, or the one girl who was at the post-office, unless he solved that riddle. It was far worse to him than the riddles of the ancient oracles or the questions of Samson had been to the ancients. No victory so glorious to any man as that when he rises over his dead self and can shout with unwavering confidence, I WILL. That young man's battle was furious and a strain on body and soul; he kept saying over and over again, "I will solve that riddle." He was sorely tempted by hunger, as he would not stop to eat. He determined to win out alone, and did not ask aid even of his mother. That night the rings fell apart in his hands and rolled on the floor. He had won! Life has few joys like that hour of victory. The



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rings had little value as pieces of steel, but his triumph over self was worth millions to him, and worth a thousand millions to his country.

The next morning his parents were surprised to see him the first one at the breakfast-table. He told of his solution of the puzzle, and said to his astonished but delighted parents that he had loafed around long enough and that he had determined to take hold and do things. He asked for an especially hard place in the shop, and entered that week on a noble, triumphant career, having few equals save those of like experience. His health became robust, his work became profitable, new business ideas were developed, and in a few years he controlled the inside business and far distanced all outside competitors. He said to his wife, "I will have a million dollars, and every dollar shall be a clean and honest dollar." In those days a million looked like a mountain of gold.



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But he secured the million and steadily raised the pay of his workmen. He became the sheik of the town, the father and adviser of every local enterprise. He was sent to Congress by a nearly unanimous vote. For eleven years he was a safe counselor of the administration at Washington and was a close friend and trusted supporter of President Lincoln.

One day in 1864 the Federal armies had been defeated by the Confederate forces and gloom shadowed the faces of the people. President Lincoln had a sleepless night—it looked like defeat and disunion. The danger was greatly increased by the abandonment of the scheme to hold California to the Union by building a railroad through the mountainous wilderness of the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains. The chief engineer who surveyed the route said that it could not be done because of the great cost. Three great financiers had been consulted and re-



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fused to undertake the hopeless task. The great Massachusetts Senator told Mr. Lincoln that there was just one man who could do that gigantic feat. The Senator said to Lincoln: "If that Congressman makes up his mind to do it, and it is left to him, he will do it. He is a careful man, but he has a will which seems to be irresistible." President Lincoln sent for the Congressman and said: "A railroad to California now will be more than an army, and it will be an army—in the saving of the Union. Will you build it?" The Congressman asked for three weeks to think. Before the end of that time he asked the Secretary of War to take his card to President Lincoln, then in Philadelphia; on the card was written, "I will." What a startlingly fascinating story from real life is the history of that mighty undertaking. Now, when the traveler passes the highest point on that transcontinental railroad, 8,550 feet above



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the sea at Sherman, Wyoming, and lifts his hat before the monument erected to the memory of that civil nobleman and hero, he is paying his respect to the self-giving heart and mighty brain of the boy who conquered *the three links.*

It may not be necessary to multiply illustrations of this vital question, but no one who lived in the journalistic circles of Washington subsequent to the Civil War can forget the power and fame of that feminine literary genius who, as the Washington correspondent of the *New York Independent*, wrote such brilliant letters. The fact that she bore the same name as the Congressman we have mentioned, though no relative of his, does not account for this reference to her. She was nearly thirty-three years old when a divorce and the breaking up of her home left her poor, ill, and under the cloud of undeserved disgrace. Her acquaintances predicted obscurity, daily toil with her hands, and a life of



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lonely sorrow. Poor victim of sad circumstances! She had but little education, and had been too full of cares to read the books of the day. Her start in the profession which she later so gracefully and forcibly adorned was the foremost topic in corners and cloakrooms at her largely attended literary receptions in Washington.

She had been told by those who loved her that a divorced woman would be shunned by all cultured women and be the butt of ridicule for fashionable men; and that as she must earn a living she should sew or embroider or act as a nurse. She certainly was too weak to wash clothes or care for a kitchen. But within her soul there was that yearning to do something worth while which seems given to almost every woman. Few women reach old age without feeling that somehow the great object of living has not been attained. The ambitions to which a man can give free wings, a woman must



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suppress or hide in deference to custom or competition. As yet she has seldom under our civilization seemed to do her best or accomplish the one great ideal of her heart and intellect. While she has the same God-given impulses, visions, and sense of power, she builds no cathedrals, spans no rivers, digs no mines, founds no nations, builds no steamships, and seldom appears in painting, sculpture, banking, or oratory. She is conscious of the native talent, sees the ideals, but must hide them until it is too late. But this woman from the interior of New York State was an exception; like Charlotte Brontë, she said, "I will write." Like the same great author, she had her rebuffs and returned manuscripts, and all the more since at that time women were unknown in the newspaper business. But her invariable answer to critics and discouraged friends was, "I will." When in 1883 she said, "I will," to the great editor



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who became her second husband, the President of the United States wrote a personal letter to say that, while he wished her joy, he could but admit that it would be a "distinct loss to humanity to have such a brilliant genius hidden by marriage."

In an automobile ride from Lake Champlain to New York I saw the city of Burlington, Vermont, with its university, where Barnes had said, "I will." At St. Johnsbury the whole city advertises Fairbanks, who said, "I will." At Brattleboro the hum of industry ever repeats the name of the boy Esty, who said, "I will"; at Holyoke, the powerful canals seem to reflect the faces of Chase and Whitney, who, when poor men, said, "I will." At Springfield the signs on the stores, banks, and factories suggest the young Chapin, who made the city prosperous with his "I will." At New Haven Whitney's determination stands out in great streets and university buildings.



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Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Atlanta, Raleigh, Niagara, Pittsburg and a hundred American cities like them are the outcome of ideas with wills behind them in the heads of common men. If every man had in the last generation done all that it was in his power to do, what sublime things would stand before us now in architecture, commerce, art, manufactures, education, and religion. The very glimpse of that vision bewilders the mind. But the many will not to do, while the few great benefactors of the race will to do. My young friend, be thou among those who will with noble motives to do.

THE END

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